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INCIDENTAL BENEFITS  
OF  
DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION:

AN ARGUMENT  
FOR  
CHRISTIAN UNION,

BY  
B. P. AYDELOTT, D. D.

---

PUBLISHERS:—CINCINNATI, G. G. JONES; PHILADELPHIA,  
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TO THE MINISTERS  
OF VARIOUS  
EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS,

WHO ARE ABOUT TO ASSEMBLE IN NEW YORK

In May next, for the Promotion of Christian Union.

I regret my inability to comply with the kind invitation of your Committee to be with you at your proposed meeting. But I cannot let the occasion pass without thus publicly expressing my hearty concurrence in your object, and endeavoring to do something "as of the ability which God giveth," towards its accomplishment.

I would, therefore, respectfully ask your attention to the following argument for christian union.

May the divine Head of the Church so guide and sanctify all your deliberations and doings, that they may abundantly tend to his glory, in the advancement of a scriptural union among his people, and the universal establishment of his kingdom on earth.

Your Brother and Servant in the Gospel,

B. P. AYDELOTT.

CINCINNATI, MARCH, 1846.



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## P R E F A C E .

**THERE** has been for the last thirty years a strong tendency towards union among Christians of different denominations. This has manifested itself not merely in associated action on the ground of their common evangelical faith, as in Bible, Tract, and other similar societies, but in frequent inquiries and efforts to ascertain what it is that keeps them asunder, and on what grounds the various denominations might come together. Many very interesting and able treatises have been written upon these questions, and not a few meetings of eminent ministers and laymen for the promotion of christian union, have been held on both sides of the Atlantic. One which recently assembled in England, found among themselves, after the fullest discussion, a harmony of views and feelings which equally surprised and delighted them.

A very remarkable volume has also recently appeared, entitled "Essays on Christian Union," by Drs. Chalmers, Balmer, and other distinguished Divines of England and Scotland, all written without previous concert or consultation except in regard to the part of the subject which each one should discuss. The work will doubtless be exten-

sively read, and cannot fail to make a strong impression. Its eminently christian spirit, frank confession of mutual faults, masterly refutation of objections, and powerful arguments and appeals must be productive of great good, and pave the way for future and more extended effort.

The writer of the following Essay has for some years seriously reflected upon the subject of christian union, and conversed much upon it with Christians of various denominations. He found none who had not been, more or less, similarly exercised. One very eminent Preacher and Divine remarked to him—"The subject is scarcely ever out of my thoughts." How many can say the same thing!

May we not then hope that He who has excited so generally this *nisus* in the christian mind towards union, will give it a speedy and a happy issue? What if there are some things to call forth apprehension, there is much also, very much to encourage expectation. The next twenty-five years will doubtless witness greater, and we believe, happier changes than the church has ever yet seen in a similar period. There are instrumentalities now in operation, and means rapidly developing which, even on the ordinary principles of moral arithmetic, warrant us to look forward to great and wide spread results. But, when we take

into view a favoring Providence, and the special influence of the Holy Spirit—and what serious reader of God's word can leave these out?—how bright the prospect before us! The calculations of the most sober, scriptural faith on this subject, would perhaps appear presumption in the eyes even of many real Christians. We are still “slow of heart to believe all the Prophets have spoken,” and the signs of the times clearly indicate.

It is remarkable, however, that though there is so broadly extended and deep an interest on the subject of christian union, and such promising measures have already been taken, and the work is still going forward, there is yet so little of clear conception concerning the manner and the means by which this result, so full of blessing, shall be accomplished. All hope for it; all express peculiar pleasure in view of it; but every one sees difficulties in the way; and scarcely any have been able to satisfy themselves on the question,—how these difficulties will be removed.\*

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\* The following extract from an editorial article in a late number of the *Episcopal Recorder* of Philadelphia, is given, as happily expressing, if we mistake not, the views and feelings of Christians generally on the subject of christian union. “It is a delightful theme to meditate upon—a thrilling prospect, however remote, to entertain—the union of those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We see not, indeed, how it is to be brought to pass, but we do ask, is any thing too hard for the Lord?”—“too hard for the Lord?” certainly not; but is it not a notion of too many that christian union is to be brought about by extraordinary, if not by miraculous influence? So far as this notion prevails, it cannot

Many reasons might be given for this perplexity in the bosoms of good men. One of these has impressed itself with peculiar force on the mind of the writer. It is the very inadequate views generally entertained respecting the providential design and advantages of denominational divisions. Why were these permitted? What good has resulted from them? Till these questions are better understood and appreciated, the great christian problem—how can church union be brought about—cannot be solved; neither would Christians be prepared for the glorious event—involving as it does so many solemn duties and responsibilities—were it sooner to break upon them. Such, at least, are the convictions of the writer.

When the wisdom, holiness, and benevolence of the great Head of the church, in his past and present dealings with us, have been faithfully studied and thankfully acknowledged, then, and not before, may we expect that still more glorious display of these perfections, which a united church

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but have a paralyzing influence, and thus delay the great accomplishment. Here, as in every thing else connected with the progress of the gospel, we have reason to believe—and doubtless the brethren of the Recorder agree in this view—that the Lord will work by his usual means, the appropriate agency of his people. Hence, the necessity of wise, diligent, holy—in one word, faithful effort on the part of Christians individually and socially. And what can be more appropriate than special consultation and co-operation to clear up every difficulty, and achieve the glorious result? In such a convergency of light and concentration of power, may we not expect just that illumination and efficiency, the need of which is now so deeply felt.

cannot fail to present. In this, as in every other case, we must be prepared for the blessing before sovereign grace can consistently confer it. Be it our endeavor, therefore, as an humble pioneer in this great work, to address ourselves to the previous inquiry—What are the incidental benefits of denominational division?

Thus much we have thought it necessary to premise lest any might suspect, even from our imperfect exhibition of the blessings which a merciful Providence has been pleased to bring out of our divisions, that we were satisfied with present attainments and aimed at no higher. Far from this. We believe that it is with the Christian in his relation to the church, as in the concerns of his individual salvation. While it is his duty in the latter to “be content with such things as he has,” it is equally his duty not to cease effort, not to rest “satisfied till he awake with the divine likeness.” So, also, let him devoutly study, and gratefully record God’s gracious dealings with the church hitherto; and let him with the renewed earnestness thus enkindled, continue to strive after those higher and richer blessings sought for her in the last earthly intercession of her suffering Head—  
“THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; AS THOU, FATHER, ART IN ME AND I IN THEE, THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE ONE IN US.”



# CHRISTIAN UNION.

---

## CHAPTER I.

Man's agency—God's providence ; Division of the church a part of God's providential dealings; distinction between denominational division and denominational difference ;—Rev. Dr. Milnor on " A Charitable Judgment, etc."

THERE are two points of view in which every event or series of events may be contemplated. It may be regarded as an effect of human agency, or as a part of God's providential dispensation. These are not at all inconsistent with each other; and yet, according as a subject is seen in the one light or the other, will it lead to very different thoughts and feelings.

Both sacred and profane history abundantly illustrate these remarks. They find confirmation, also, in the daily experience of every careful observer of human life. As

an instance taken from the first we may point to the case of Joseph. His residence in Egypt was brought about by the agency of his brethren,—an agency which cannot but call forth our condemnation and abhorrence. And yet it was a link in God's wise and gracious dealings with his people calculated to excite the admiration and gratitude of every pious heart. "As for you," said Joseph to his brethren, "ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as at this day, to save much people alive." (Gen. l. 20.) It is needless to multiply examples. That adduced will be sufficient, we doubt not, with every candid, seriously reflecting mind, to shew that there is no human conduct, however foolish, base, and wicked, but may furnish evidence of the wise, and holy, and unspeakably benevolent providence of God.

In the following pages we propose to consider the division of the christian church, not as a work of man, but as a part of God's providential dealings. Regarded in the



former point of view, this subject has been much, and profitably discussed, though it is by no means exhausted. In the latter respect, it is believed, that very little has been said,—only here and there a brief remark incidentally dropped in theological treatises, or in works on practical piety. Such being the case, the writer was left almost entirely to his own observation and judgment; he cannot but suppose, therefore, that his essay is very imperfect—a mere beginning, to be taken up and completed by more competent hands. Still, did he not hope that it might, with the divine blessing, be the means, in some humble degree, of allaying dissention among christians, and encouraging them to wiser and more successful efforts in the cause of their common Lord, by promoting in their hearts the growth of a sound, scriptural charity, he would feel it his duty rather to throw it into the fire, than commit it to the press.

Here we would ask the reader's attention to a distinction which will appear in the

following pages, and which involves principles that, if carefully reflected upon, will very much simplify the whole subject, and divest it of many difficulties. We mean the distinction between denominational division and denominational difference. By the former is intended not merely a separation in the church, but such a separation as leads multitudes to seek their own peculiar denominational interests mainly, if not entirely, instead of keeping an eye single to the glory of God in the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom. It is Presbyterianism, or Episcopacy, or Methodism, or some similar comparatively little object it wishes to promote; and not the great work of Christ in the salvation of souls. Wherever this spirit of division exists, it necessarily dwarfs the soul of the man. His piety is but of a weak, sickly growth at the best. He cannot rise to the grandeur of the christian character. He cannot make the sacrifices of a Paul, a Brainerd, or a Martyn. He may be a sturdy polemic, but never a

christian hero — “a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” How far this spirit prevails in the various denominational ranks, it is not our purpose to inquire. It ought not to exist at all. So far as it does, it dishonors them and the holy name they profess, and mars the work which God has given them to do. Many, very many, of every name, we doubt not, are in a goodly degree exempt from it.

By denominational difference we understand all that distinguishes from each other the various denominations professing the same essential truths of the gospel. While the spirit of division is always wrong, attachment to denominational differences is not necessarily so, because it may be entertained consistently with the exercise of the most enlarged charity. The spirit of division cannot live in the Millennium, it will retreat and bury itself in the darkness of the pit, before the holy brightness of that day is poured over the earth.

But, it may well be doubted, whether denominational differences will ever be en-

tirely done away. It is at least probable that they will not. We are free to confess that we would as soon expect to see "in the latter day" the whole earth reduced to the dead level of a prairie, or the "human face divine" to one unvarying type and expression, as to witness entire uniformity in the church of Christ. Indeed, it is one of the chief excellencies of christianity, in our view,—one of its noblest evidences of being God's handiwork, that it is capable, without losing its essential character, of such marvellous adaptations to the varied condition and circumstances of man. And, as the latter never can be altogether the same in this world, so we never expect to see perfect sameness in the christian church. "The sacramental host of God's elect" will still continue a host,—all will not be infantry or cavalry, artillery or light troops;—one spirit will indeed pervade and unite the whole, but their uniform as well as their weapons may and must widely vary to fit them for their different services.

How far, indeed, denominational differences will diminish when division has ceased to exist, it is for no one now to say. Certainly they may be much less than at present,—no more, we feel assured, than man's *innocent exigencies* will require, and *perfect charity* admit.

When the writer had nearly finished this treatise he received a pamphlet entitled "A CHARITABLE JUDGMENT of the opinions and conduct of others, recommended; being the last sermon preached in St. George's church, New-York, Sunday, April 6th, 1845: By the Rev. James Milnor, D. D." The discourse is full of good sense and scriptural wisdom, conveyed in a peculiarly clear, manly, unaffected style, and imbued throughout with the spirit of that Kingdom on whose very verge the preacher was then unconsciously treading;—a meet close for a ministry so "pure, lovely, and of good report,"—a blessed preparation for the ministry of the upper sanctuary. Had this admirable sermon reached us sooner, gladly

would we have enriched our pages with much of its teachings. As it is, we can find room in this introductory chapter for only a few extracts, which, while read with deep gratification by enlightened christians of every name, will be discerned to have an important bearing upon the subject before us.

“Whether the happiness of society, the extension of Christ’s Kingdom, the dismay of infidels, or the prosperity of our own communion, be an object of desire, I am persuaded each will be best promoted by that mild and conciliatory temper, to the cultivation of which the minds of christians have of late years, so much more than formerly, been directed. It is not by a stately and proud reserve in our demeanor towards others, nor by advancing high-sounding and exclusive claims to the favor of God, nor by casting contemptuous sneers at the principles or systems of such as in outward things walk not with us, if they profess allegiance to the same master, and faith in

his blessed gospel, that true religion will be promoted.”

Again: “We are free to express our persuasion, that God does not suffer one of his real children to embrace, and die in the belief of any dogma, by which his salvation is endangered. The Apostle tells us of those who being in *damnable* heresies; but though every deviation from the truth is error, every such deviation is not damnable error. Some things are fundamentally important, others are NOT so. I am aware that there may seem to be difficulty in determining what are of the one, or the other description. I know of no better rule of distinction than this: All truths are fundamental, the belief of which is necessary to produce such exercises of faith and holiness, without which, according to the scriptures, he cannot be saved. For instance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely essential to the salvation of those to whom he has been revealed. For without faith it is impossible to please God.

Repentance for sin is essential; for God commandeth all men every where to repent. Spiritual regeneration is essential: for Christ declares, except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Sanctification is essential: for without holiness no man can see the Lord. Many of secondary importance, however, may be believed or disbelieved by persons who profess ALL the doctrines that have been stated, and others equally weighty: which neither leading into immoral practice, nor putting in jeopardy the salvation of the soul, do not require that the bond of christian brotherhood should be severed."

Once more,—“But when christians perceive that others who walk not with them in external things, or speculatively differ from them on some points of doctrine, are evidently one with them in spirit; when they are compelled to yield to the persuasion that with all their supposed mistakes, God has loved and accepted them, surely feelings of attachment must arise, which no



points of unimportant difference can repress. Must not their hearts be drawn towards those whom they cannot but view as fellow-heirs with them of an inheritance of glory, with grateful exercises of christian affection and esteem? Can they refuse to love those whom their Heavenly Father loves? Can they deny the hand of fellowship, and the heart of sympathy, to brethren differing from them in name, but sprinkled with the same redeeming blood, justified by the same grace, sanctified by the same spirit as themselves? Is there weight, dear brethren, in these suggestions? Then how must we lament that error, which suffers alienation of affection, and reluctance to friendly intercourse, to be the consequence of differences about the inferior topics, or slighter circumstantial of religion! How egregious the mistake of supposing a claim to heaven to be forfeited by anything else than an abandonment of the faith and holiness of the gospel!"

Would that nothing may be found in the

following pages at variance with the spirit and sentiments of this noble testimony of our beloved, departed brother! “By it he being dead yet speaketh.”

The peace of the church, the charity of its individual members, their increase in sound knowledge, heavenly wisdom, and holy efficiency;—these, for their own sake, and as the surest means of a true scriptural union, are among the highest objects of the enlightened christian’s desire and endeavor. It was to promote these the writer ventured with much diffidence to take up his pen. If what he has written shall, with the Divine blessing, contribute in any degree, however humble, towards these goodly results. his labor will not be in vain.



## CHAPTER II.

The principle of union;—why it has failed; imperfection of christian professors; proper use of division, division an evil;—benefits of division incidental;—the present inquiry a novel one.

CHRISTIANITY is the only principle of union and true peace among men. It needs only to be embraced with the whole heart to produce these goodly results. That they have not heretofore been fully witnessed, is then not the fault of christianity. It pours the effulgence of a noon day's sun upon the common ground of a holy brotherhood, and addresses to each and to all the most solemn and heart-affecting motives to come up to it.

It is not our purpose here to point out the particular causes of this lamentable failure. Suffice it to observe the obvious fact that it does exist—the visible church is divided; and the almost equally obvious fact that

the fault is not in christianity, but in its professors. Multitudes of these are utter strangers to the vitality of religion; multitudes more have very imperfect apprehensions of it; and how few of them can say that they have given up their whole heart to it. Such being the case, it is easy to see from what denominational divisions have sprung. They are a part of those "offences which must come." They have resulted by a moral necessity from the manifold imperfection of christian professors.

But great as the evils of division are, we have an infallible remedy, and therefore have no reason to despair; neither has any, in the meanwhile, a right to upbraid where none can claim exemption from blameworthiness. True wisdom would dictate the inquiry—what good has grown out of these divisions among professing christians? For surely they who believe that "God causeth the wrath of man to praise him;"—and that "all things work together for good to them that love him,"

cannot doubt but that good has resulted, in some way, even from these evils.

We say *evils*,—for it ought never to be forgotten that divisions in the christian body are in themselves evils. They originate in sin; they are productive of sin; and it behoves us all seriously to set ourselves to the work of endeavoring to remove them. The benefits which have resulted from division have been altogether incidental, and the contemplation of these, by inspiring us with thankfulness for that gracious, overruling Providence which thus educes good out of evil, will best prepare us, not only for the patient endurance of the latter, but for wise and energetic efforts to bring it to a speedy end. The charity,—to name no more,—which such a contemplation cannot but kindle up in our hearts towards those with whom we differ, will of itself be one of the most powerful means of doing away our divisions.

What, then, are some of the incidental benefits growing out of denominational

division? The inquiry is a novel one, at least to the writer. He has read and heard much of the evils of division, but its benefits, so far as he is aware, have been seldom and very imperfectly exhibited. And though he doubts not that the consideration of these evils, painful as it is, has had a salutary influence in preventing many divisions which would otherwise have arisen; he is yet persuaded that a calm and candid view of their attendant benefits, while it cannot but be a pleasing task, will have a more salutary operation upon the personal piety of the observer, and do far more to heal the divisions of the church.



## CHAPTER III.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION MORE WIDELY DIFFUSED, AT HOME AND ABROAD, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL ?

A united, and eminently holy church the best means of extending the gospel ; a vast, united, unholy ecclesiastical body becomes more and more powerful for evil ; but less and less efficient for good ; division of such a body tends to revive religion and diffuse the gospel ; a common complaint of some good men about denominational divisions stated and answered.

WERE all the professed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ thoroughly imbued with the light and spirit of his gospel, they would perfectly obey the exhortation of the Apostle—"stand fast in one spirit, with one mind ; striving together for the faith of the gospel." And nothing, in this case, could long withstand their influence ; the whole world would speedily be converted to God. There can be no instrumentality like that of a holy, united church,—none so strong,

and wisely adapted to accomplish the work of the Lord. It would be perfectly peaceful and yet irresistible.

But the question for us is—not what a thoroughly sanctified church could do? It is—taking the manifold imperfection of professing christians into view, have not their very divisions tended more widely to diffuse the preaching of the gospel? We believe that they have.

Has not all church history taught us that, unless the christian graces are largely possessed and in lively exercise in a vast, united ecclesiastical body, its continual tendency is to spiritual darkness, insensibility, and death? Its influences for evil will grow apace, while its efficiency for good as rapidly diminishes.

But let this same body be sundered into three or four parts, and does not the record of the past warrant us to expect that the result of such division will be manifestly new life in each, and an increased zeal in the whole to spread the gospel? Now, while



we cannot but see that in such cases much may be explained by the operation of very evil principles,—“some preach Christ, even of envy and strife,”—still the natural, and very powerful, and not necessarily unholy principle of competition will come into play, and call forth every energy of the several denominations to enlarge their borders by extending the preaching of the gospel.—Who cannot see the working of this principle in the different christian bodies of our own country? Are they not thus continually “provoking each other to love and good works?” And has not the result been a much more rapid and wide-spread diffusion of the gospel, both at home and abroad?\*

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\* Few persons are aware of the vastly greater efficiency of a free church in comparison with one shackled and paralysed by State establishment. We, therefore, invite the reader's attention to the following statistics, not to minister to unholy triumph, but as furnishing matter for cheering reflection to the friends of free institutions.

LIVERPOOL HAS—		NEW-YORK HAS—	
Population, - - -	210,000	Population, - - -	220,000
Ministers, - - - -	57	Ministers, - - - -	142
Churches, - - - -	57	Churches, - - - -	132
Communicants, -	18,000	Communicants' -	31,337

May it not, indeed, be seriously doubted whether if any one of the present denominations had from the first possessed our whole country, and controlled its religion, christianity would not, by this time, have run down among us? Had not such denomination far more spiritual life and holiness than any which the world has ever yet seen, all past experience compels us to fear that its history would have exhibited sad evidence of almost uninterrupted spiritual declension, and consequent loss of influence for good over the world about it.

Here, however, it may not be amiss to

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EDINBURGH HAS—		PHILADELPHIA HAS—	
Population,	- - 150,000	Population,	- - 200,000
Ministers,	- - - 70	Ministers,	- - - 137
Churches,	- - - 65	Churches,	- - - - 83
NOTTINGHAM HAS—		BOSTON HAS—	
Population,	- - 50,000	Population,	- - 60,000
Ministers,	- - - 23	Ministers,	- - - - 57
Churches,	- - - - 23	Churches,	- - - - 55
UNITED STATES HAVE—		IN ENGLAND the proportion	
Population,	- - 13,000,000	is about the same between	
Ministers,	- - - 11,450	the ministers and population,	
Churches,	- - - 12,580	but they have only 1,050,000	
Communicants,	- 1,550,890	Communicants.	

notice a complaint at times heard from good men. Agents of missionary and other religious societies not unfrequently tell us that in a single village or other small community it is usual to find two or three churches of different evangelical denominations, each one of which can, of course, but poorly sustain itself, though all combined would form one respectable, efficient congregation. This they complain of as an evil adding greatly to their labor, while it diminishes their success.

Now, that such division is an evil there

Let it be considered that in a large proportion of the Churches in England, the Communion is *free*—i. e. there is little or no attention to discipline in admitting or excluding church members; but in the United States, communion is almost universally *strict*. And yet the number of communicants is more than one-third greater in the United States than that in England. The reader who would see this comparison pursued further, may consult "VISIT TO THE AMERICAN CHURCHES," by *Reed & Matheson*.

Thus it is seen that all the power of the British government, combined with an active dissent, has fallen vastly short of effecting during ages, what this nation—in comparison but of yesterday—has already accomplished. Verily, the greatest favor which the State can confer upon the Church is, to let it alone. "My kingdom is not of this world."

can be no doubt ; and were such congregations to become so wise and holy as to put aside every barrier to union, and come together in the right spirit, there can be as little doubt that they would grow much more rapidly in grace themselves, and be able to do far more for the cause of Christ in the world. And who, with the bible in his hands, does not believe that the day is coming when many such blessed events shall be realized.

Still, is not the complaint of which we are now speaking, as unwise as it is unprofitable ? It proceeds upon the mistaken notion, that to us there is only the alternative of a divided and comparatively weak, though in the main, sound church ; or a united, strong, holy church, so holy as the world has never yet witnessed.— But let it never be forgotten that as professors of religion commonly now are, we must have them either divided, and, with their present motives to exertion doing some good ; or, united in one large, dark, cor-

rupt church, daily sinking lower and lower, and constantly operating at least as an obstacle in the way of Christ's cause, and too often as a persecutor of his people. This is, unhappily, our present alternative, or certainly has been in times past.

We are not left to conjecture here.—Does not almost the whole history of the church prove this fact, humiliating as it is? Let any one, for example, look into the account of the labors of Whitefield, Wesley, and their associates, even as given by Southey, a staunch friend of the Established Church, and he cannot but rise up with the conviction, that all the evils of division are as nothing in comparison with the evils of such a union as these men encountered. Many of the most densely populated districts in England—at that time with a dissenting interest too small and feeble to have much influence upon the national church—presented a darkness, a degradation, a brutality almost

pagan,—such a revolting moral aspect as could not be paralleled in the sparsest settlements of our own country, divided up as they are among so many denominations. Missionaries to the heathen have rarely met with worse treatment than these men of God too often received in their own nominally Christian land.

Instead, then, of complaining so much of the evils of division, let us reflect more upon the vastly greater evils it has prevented, and upon the many precious benefits to the production of which it has been providentially overruled. When duly thankful for these things, we shall be better prepared for a true church union, and in the meanwhile, shall be found “doing with our might whatever our hand findeth to do” towards this glorious consummation.



## CHAPTER IV.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION GREATLY INCREASED THE NUMBER OF FAITHFUL MINISTERS?

A call to the ministry ;—the church's duty in the matter.

WHILE God alone calls men to the ministry of the gospel, it is the duty of the Church to seek them out, and bring them forward. We can no more expect the multiplication of faithful ministers than of ordinary christians, without the use of appropriate means. Christians, and especially christian pastors, must notice the religious character and talents of pious young men, and, if they find these suitable for the work of the ministry, they must take them by the hand, and give them all suitable advice and encouragement.

In an entirely holy church this important duty would be perfectly performed,

and no young man, whom there was ground to hope that God had called to the ministry, would be passed over, or, suffered to fall short for want of brotherly counsel and aid. But just in proportion as the church was imperfect would this work be imperfectly done. As its piety waned, the number of its faithful ministers would be less and less.

Here, also, the competition growing out of denominational division has come in, and done very much of what would otherwise have been left undone. The various denominations, in their solicitude to extend the gospel as preached by themselves, at home and abroad, have with increased zeal sought out their youth of piety and promise, and supplied them with the means of preparation for the sacred office, and then sent them to our own waste places, and to heathen, and foreign lands. How many of these ministers who have risen highest in wisdom, and honor, and usefulness, would have



remained in their original destitution and obscurity, had their lot been cast in a country overshadowed by one vast, effete church establishment that tolerated no differing communions ?

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## CHAPTER V.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION DONE MUCH  
TO PROMOTE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ?

The world will be educated ;—what shall this education be ? Christianity the only safe principle of education ;—without such education free institutions cannot be upheld.

WE need say nothing, at this day, in praise of education. All now acknowledge its excellence and absolute necessity. Hence, the result is certain,—*the world will be educated.* But shall this education be merely physical and intellectual—such education as will make the man proud.

and wise and strong to do evil? or shall it also be moral—that training of the heart which alone can fit and dispose its subjects to use their high powers to the glory of God, the good of their fellow creatures, and their own happiness?

Now, we know of nothing that can supply the moral education which human nature needs, but christianity. It was for the want of this that all ancient nations declined and came to ruin. Without this, free institutions cannot be sustained. A perfect church would of course best supply this want.\*

But here, taking christians as they are, the good effect of denominational

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\* Let it be here remarked, once for all, that when we use, in the following inquiry, the terms perfect,—and perfectly holy, and similar expressions in regard to christians and the church,—we do not employ them in their absolute, but relative sense. We mean, in other words, a very high degree of holiness or spiritual excellence, such as the characters of some of the saints have, in every age, exhibited, and, we doubt not, do now exhibit; and such as believers will generally, if not universally possess in “the latter day glory.”

divisions is strikingly seen. What multitudes of schools, academies, and colleges have these brought into existence. Each denomination wishes its youth educated not only in our common christianity, but in its own peculiarities; and to extend this instruction, as widely as possible, as one powerful means of advancing its own growth and prosperity. So well is this understood that the denomination who could be so infatuated as to neglect the work of education, would be universally and confidently expected to dwindle and come to nought. But none are now so unwise; and this desire to educate has multiplied and is multiplying schools, and the means of instruction generally, and teachers, and pupils, to an extent which mere christianity — we mean, such as we have hitherto been privileged to behold — could never have reached.

## CHAPTER VI.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION PROMOTED  
THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SOUND, SCRIPTURAL  
DOCTRINE ?

Personal piety highly conducive to theological knowledge and sound doctrine. A united and eminently holy church would, therefore, be an eminently enlightened church, and most active in diffusing the light ; but just the opposite is it with a powerful, unholy church. The tendency of denominational division to spread the truth ;—this shewn also indirectly where religious liberty is not allowed.

IT has been remarked, with equal beauty and truth, that love in the heart is the best commentary on the bible. Just in proportion as we are under the influence of this holy principle, will we discover the suitableness, the preciousness, and all-sufficiency of God's word. And if so with the individual christian, what heights and depths, what brightness and glory would be seen in the scriptures by the whole church if made perfect in

love! Were all christians even Leightons or Baxters, Brainerds or Martyns, how effulgent the illumination, and how quickly would it be poured over the dark places of the earth! But had the church remained one, and lived up to her high privileges, she would long since have attained to such riches of knowledge and wisdom in the study of divine truth as none can now conceive, and few believe. Emphatically would she have been "the light of the world."

But just the opposite of this is it with a great, united, unholy church. Her light becomes darkness, deeper and deeper; and, as she goes down into the valley of spiritual death, and its gloom and corruptions thicken around her, she strives, with the instinct of self-preservation, to conceal from the people the scriptures that condemn her, and persecutes all who love and cleave to God's word. The ignorance, wickedness, and cruelty into which such a body may sink, would be utterly

incredible, were it not for those dreadful records which the faithful pages of history hold up.

But who cannot see that here, in the absence of a perfectly holy church, denominational divisions among christians have been over-ruled for great good?—The desire to sustain its own positions and carry out its own views has stimulated each denomination to search thoroughly into God's word, and to ransack every department of human knowledge for whatever might develop the sense of the bible. How much this has done to promote theological knowledge, and sound, scriptural doctrine may easily be seen by any one who will contrast those parts of christendom in which liberty of conscience and of denominational difference exists, with those in which it does not. In the one the people are ignorant, superstitious, oppressed, degraded, miserable; in the other they are comparatively enlightened, free, elevated, and happy.

## CHAPTER VII.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION GREATLY  
EXTENDED AND ELEVATED THE RELIGIOUS  
PERIODICAL PRESS ?

The periodical press in despotic countries. Salutory effects of religious liberty upon the religious periodical press.— This press commands the best minds and the patronage of each denomination. Its excellence;—Dr. Chalmers' testimony;—it is dreaded by those who hate the truth and love arbitrary power.

WE here say nothing of the secular, periodical press, though it might easily be shewn that this flourishes most, and indeed only where denominational divisions exist. What is this press in Russia, Austria, Spain, Portugal, or Italy? It scarcely exists, except in the case of some few governmental organs, and scientific journals—and these all under the strictest police.

But it is emphatically true, that denominational division has proved the most

powerful means of extending and elevating the religious periodical press. Indeed, it was denominational division that called it into existence. Where was it before the Reformation? And where is it now, in those lands unblessed by that event?

Hence, where there is most religious liberty, there we find the greatest number of religious periodicals, and these of the highest character, literary and theological. It cannot be otherwise. For freedom of conscience has ever been accompanied by denominational differences and each denomination has speedily become sensible that the periodical press, if rightly conducted, would prove one of its most ready and efficient means of defence and extension; and none could long close their eyes to its value as an instrument of propagating their common christianity.

For these reasons the periodical press has ever commanded, in each denomination, their best talent, and called out such



an interest in its behalf, at least among themselves, as secured for it their general patronage. The very collisions which occasionally take place between the periodicals of different denominations will be sure to arouse increased attention to them, and promote their circulation. And has not all experience proved, that under such circumstances, these publications will not only multiply, but rise in ability and every real excellence of character? It was recently and justly remarked of the periodical press, generally, by one of the most distinguished transatlantic scholars and divines, Dr. Chalmers, that it exhibited the finest specimens of every variety of English style; that nothing superior to it in ease, beauty, and vigor could be found in the most finished pages of Swift, Addison, and other Classic writers of the past age.

We have no sympathy, therefore, with those who grieve over the multiplication of religious periodicals, and would limit

these to a very few, issued in our chief cities. We are quite confident that those left after such a proscription would soon be no better supported than they now are; and entirely confident that they would not deserve it so well.

Neither do we sympathize with the complaints now and then heard, of the freedom of the periodical press in its notices of the proceedings of ecclesiastical bodies, and the doings of ecclesiastical functionaries. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd! But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."— Those who hate the truth and love arbitrary power will always dread a sound, independent press. They can manage every other adversary more easily than this; and so long as it remains unbought, or unawed into submission, they can have no hope of success.

## CHAPTER VIII.

DOES NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION TEND TO  
PRODUCE A SUPERIOR MORALITY ?

“By their fruits ye shall know them”—a rule which appeals to the conscience and common sense of men;—its influence in raising the standard of discipline wherever different denominations exist;—countries overshadowed by an intolerant, established church, are sure to run down in morals,—Sweden, Russia, &c.

THERE is something in the scriptural rule—“by their fruits ye shall know them;”—which commends it to every man’s conscience and common sense. Hence, the different denominations have not failed to perceive that however perfect their theological defences might be, these would not be sufficient to protect them, and much less to win others to their ranks. They must excel others in those practical fruits of which all can judge and for which all are watchful, if they would grow, and be strong, and extend their influence.—This has unquestionably raised a loftier standard of discipline in each denomina-

tion, led them to look more carefully over the walk of their members, and promptly to clear themselves of those bad characters and evil practices which would otherwise be sure to disgrace and weaken them, and hinder their progress. In a word, this denominational watchfulness, each of itself and over every other, has produced,—defectively indeed, and yet to an extent which cannot but excite in the bosom of the enlightened christian lively emotions of pleasure and thankfulness,—has produced in a goodly degree those moral fruits which only the watchful care of a church “made perfect in love” would have ripened into the highest excellence.

But just as a single church has had exclusive possession of a country will the morals of its members be low, partly from the ignorance into which they are sure to sink, and in part, because such a church will be almost uniformly disposed rather to wink at and cover over, than expose and correct the faults of its members. In Spain, Portugal, Italy, Mexico, and Brazil

where only one denomination is tolerated, the state of morals is very corrupt; but in England, whose ecclesiastical establishment is surrounded by so many dissenting bodies, it is vastly better; and, again, in Scotland, where the state church is nearly balanced by rival communions, it is still better.

But we have other, and yet more remarkable instances in point. Sweden, nominally protestant, tolerates but one church; she permits neither schism nor dissent. Even an humble, unpretending Methodist Chapel, which had been for a short time winked at in Stockholm, was recently closed. We are not surprised, therefore, upon looking into the moral statistics of this kingdom, to find it more corrupt than any other protestant state in Europe. Intemperance and licentiousness, with their host of attendant evils prevail, to a lamentable extent.\*

Intolerant Russia, with her Greek church, is in quite as bad, if not a worse

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\* Laing's Tour in Sweden in 1838. Also, Rev. Dr. Baird's Visit to Northern Europe, Vol. II, page 181—202.

condition.† One fact speaks volumes concerning its morals. The sale of spirituous liquors is an affair of government. It thus, instead of being the guardian of the morals of the people, becomes the great, universally present, and almost irresistible tempter to vice. It has, too, its agents for the traffic in intoxicating drinks wherever they can possibly find customers.— No less than eighty-one millions of gallons of Brandy alone, are thus purchased and drunk each year by the peasantry. The profits of this horrid, demoralizing traffic yield to the government nearly one fourth of its revenues. “The condition of these countries” — Sweden and Russia — justly remarks a recent writer, “is a poor recommendation of religious uniformity.”

With such facts before us, the inference is irresistible. Professing christians must be much more holy than they hitherto have usually been, before they can safely dispense with mutual denominational watchfulness and reciprocal moral influence.

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† Dr. Pinkerton's Russia.

## CHAPTER IX.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION DONE MUCH TO ACCOMMODATE CHRISTIANITY TO THE VAST VARIETY OF INTELLECT, TASTE, HABITS, AND PURSUITS AMONG MEN ?

Men and classes of men differ very widely ;— what moves and attracts one will often have no effect upon, or perhaps repel another. Hence, in temporal things, a wise man varies his modes of influence. This diversity of human character and condition has produced denominational differences, and the result has been a large gain to the church. Even without division, the Church, if entirely imbued with “ the spirit of love and of a sound mind,” would provide for the various exigencies of men.

THAT men differ very much in mind and taste, as well as in their habits and pursuits in life, is manifest; and it is equally manifest that these differences must not be overlooked by him who would inform or influence them. That which is strongly attractive to one will have no interest for another. What this class can easily un-

derstand, may be utterly beyond the comprehension of that. A subject presented in a certain way will be highly pleasing to some, but very offensive to others.— A prudent man is, therefore, careful to accommodate himself to the intellect, the taste, the habits, and the pursuits of those whom he addresses. He knows that it is only in this way he can interest, instruct, and influence them.

But, do not these remarks hold good in the things of religion, as well as in the affairs of this life? Unless the same prudence which sensible, upright men employ in commending worldly interests to others is exercised by the christian in his endeavors to do good, he will certainly fail of success, and not only so, but often injure the cause which he has so much at heart.

It will readily be granted, that no one man has such versatility of talent as fits him equally to move all orders of minds, and all classes of persons. Indeed, the



very qualifications which pre-eminently adapt an individual to operate upon one portion of society, often constitute an insuperable hindrance to his usefulness among others. Neither will any careful observer, we think, deny that different religious denominations, though accordant in the essentials of christianity, have their peculiar adaptations to certain orders of minds, and to particular classes of the community. It is not needful here to inquire into the several causes of these denominational varieties,—what it is which has impressed its peculiarities upon each sect; it is sufficient for our purpose to know that these exist.\*

Now, it is, we believe, these different types of christianity, presented by the different christian churches, which fit them for widely different fields of labor and influ-

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\*The reader will discern that above and elsewhere in the course of our remarks we use the terms, sect, sectarian, sectarianism, — not in an odious sense, but simply as equivalents to the words—denomination, denominational, etc:—to prevent the too frequent repetition of the latter.

ence, and thus enable them to cover and cultivate much ground that would otherwise be unoccupied and unimproved. — Were our christianity wholly Methodistic, or Episcopal, or Presbyterian — such a christianity would be above or below large masses of mind; or, while it might attract one order of hearers, it would disgust and repel many others. Doubtless, there are multitudes who become pious and reach heaven under Methodistic ministrations, whom Presbyterianism could never reach. And the latter may be the honored means of turning to God many who would be totally uninfluenced by the services of the Episcopal church. Episcopacy, in its turn, presents attractions and extends saving blessings to a large class whom neither Methodism nor Presbyterianism could influence. The same remarks may be extended to other evangelical denominations. Their several peculiarities fit them for their several fields of exertion; and prepare each to accomplish a good which none other could achieve.

Till, then, the church has such a measure of wisdom, and love, and efficiency, as will enable and dispose her to adapt herself to the great varieties which exist among men—in other words, till the church has become much more holy than she has ever yet been — denominational division will continue, and continue also to be a benefit to the world.

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## CHAPTER X.

### DOES NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION OPERATE TO COUNTERACT THE EVILS OF ULTRAISM?

What ultraism is. It overlooks times, circumstances, and, too often, charity. The tendency to ultraism always exists. True zeal not ultraism. Different manifestations of ultraism,—how denominational division counteracts these.

By ultraism in religion we mean the carrying out of some principle, true and good in itself, beyond sound judgment and

charity. There is a time for all things; and what is proper and right in some circumstances, may be very improper and wrong under others. It is the part of christian wisdom to decide in such cases; and where her decisions are respected, peace and love, as well as progress in every true excellence may be looked for. But ultraism would destroy nearly all this good. It overlooks times — makes no account of circumstances, and, without designing it, too often tramples the claims of charity under foot.

The tendency to ultraism always exists, and must be guarded against, even in the best. But it is in men of defective judgment and ardent temperament that its evils are most seen. Even a very high degree of piety cannot always preserve such men from its disastrous influences. — Let us not here be misunderstood. We would not say one word in disparagement of true zeal; far from this; we regard it as the genial warmth of godliness, and

full of blessings. Without it our religion is a dead and worse than useless form.— But a “zeal without knowledge” — the ultraism of which we are now speaking, is alike injurious to its subject and to the church.

But, whether zeal be true or false, it is necessarily efficient; and, therefore, just in proportion as a church is defective in holiness will ultraism, in some of its operations, be sure to manifest itself. Hence, one denomination, in its superstitious veneration for the Lord's Supper, did not hesitate to drive away thousands of her best members because they were unwilling to receive it in a kneeling posture. Some churches have barred their communion against all who cannot subscribe to the doctrine of total abstinence, or, in common phrase, take the temperance pledge; thus, making it a vital point of christianity.\* And on the other hand,

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\* Total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors as a beverage, is, without doubt, one most important means of promoting the great, and very comprehensive christian grace

others have excommunicated all who join a temperance society, or any other voluntary association for moral purposes.— Others, again, will tolerate only a particular style of garb, address and living in their members. The coat, the speech, the furniture, must all be of the precise cut, or the offender be cast out. Such instances it would be quite an easy, but by no means a pleasant task to multiply to almost any extent. Let those mentioned suffice.

Whilst, then, we deny not that the Lord's Supper is to be revered, that temperance is a christian virtue, that

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of temperance. So important, indeed, is this principle in the eyes of the writer, that he sees not how any really pious man, in view of the whole subject, could refuse to adopt it. And, as light is rapidly increasing, the day will soon come, we feel assured, when all christians will think alike in this matter. But, that there are now many such who are not "fully persuaded in their own minds," is a fact we cannot deny. Were, then, the temperance pledge universally adopted as a term of communion, would not many be rejected whom the Lord has received? And what are we that we can thus withstand God?

If Paul would not eat even meat, while the world stood, lest he might offend a weak brother, surely the same charity

abuses of voluntary associations are to be carefully guarded against, and that all impropriety in dress, conversation, and mode of living, is contrary to God's word, we cannot close our eyes to the evils which ultraism on these subjects would introduce into the church. Were any one of the present denominations the sole church tolerated in our land, what multitudes of the truly pious would, by its ultraisms, be excluded from its communion! And yet, have we any reason to believe that such an established church would be any better in this respect than the existing denominations? Nay, is there not much

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requires that we abstain from what is a mere indulgence,—a thing not at all necessary to our health or happiness,—but which is fraught with wretchedness and ruin to thousands. It is upon this basis of christian charity we would place, so far as the church is concerned, the cause of temperance;—and is it not a ground broad enough, and strong enough, to uphold any good cause, however great? Just as fast as the claims of the former are understood and appreciated, will the obligations of the latter be respected.

Does not true charity, then, call upon the church to diffuse the light as rapidly and widely as possible, and enjoin upon her, at the same time, to render her discipline commensurate, and only commensurate with such illumina-

reason to fear that it would be vastly more ultra; and that all who refused to "receive its mark in their right hand or in their foreheads," would not only be excommunicated, but persecuted even unto prison and to death.

Here, then, we discover one benefit of differing denominations. What if they have all run, more or less, into ultraisms, it has not—thanks to an over-ruling Providence—been ultraism of the same kind. They have operated, therefore, in the long run, as correctives of each other's errors; and, in the meanwhile, afforded refuge to the dissidents from each other's ultraism.

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tion? If these views are correct, each church must now be permitted to judge for itself, as individual cases arise, how far it may properly go in this matter; and ought, charitably, to allow the same liberty to other churches.—Differences, here, are not sufficient grounds for casting out each other's names as evil.

Thus much we have thought it proper to say in order to prevent, if possible, any wrong construction that might be put upon what we have said, in the above chapter, upon the subject of temperance. We will add, only, that the views here thrown out are applicable, also, if we mistake not, to most other ecclesiastical ultraisms,



## CHAPTER XI.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION KEPT VERY MANY WITHIN THE PALE OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH, AND THUS SECURED THEIR INFLUENCE IN FAVOR OF THE TRUTH, WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN OPPOSERS OF THE GOSPEL, OR, AT LEAST, INDIFFERENT TO IT ?

Three great classes in the visible church,—the regenerate, the intelligent believer, the mere supporter of the sect. The latter, retained almost entirely by denominational peculiarities. His influence, however, in many respects, valuable. Christianity, stripped of denominational attractions, would be sure to repel him.

THERE are three great classes in the visible church. The first and smallest class is made up of believers, christians in the highest sense of the term, those who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. These have a spiritual discernment of the truth ; hence, they heartily embrace it, and faithfully profess it before men. No change of circumstances can drive such persons from the church, because

their attachment to it springs from the strongest principles of their nature—a conscience and a heart renewed by the Holy Ghost. Their highest interests, they know to be all identified with those of Christ's church. Hence, they will assuredly cling to it in life and in death. Upon the steadfastness of christians we may then calculate with the strongest moral assurance.

A second, and, still larger class are those who hold the great principles of christianity because convinced of their truth. Such persons may, therefore, be called intelligent supporters of the gospel. Though they are not pious persons, or true christians, and, of course, have no saving interest in the blessings of the gospel, yet, their convictions forbid their going into the ranks of infidels, or throwing their influence into the scale of anti-christian errors.

The last class is composed of those whom denominational attachment, alone,

keeps within the bounds of the visible church. They are not regenerated persons, neither are the doctrines of the gospel a matter of intelligent conviction with them. They know little or nothing about them; but still, without making any religious profession they are more or less active supporters of the denominations to which they respectively belong, and to the peculiarities of which they are attached either from the prejudices of education, or natural temperament, or some accidental circumstance.

Now, were these several denominational peculiarities at once removed, the only choice to all such persons would be between the pure, holy truths of the gospel and the godly life it requires, on the one hand; and, on the other, a state of indifference, or open infidelity, or an infidelity the more dangerous, because concealed under the guise of some professedly christian, but really anti-evangelical denomination.— It needs scarcely be said, where, in such

a case, the great majority of these persons would be found. The natural enmity of their hearts thus called out, would array them at once against the truth, or at least cause them to withdraw from its support. They never loved the truth; they never upheld the church for the truth's sake; indeed, they never knew any thing of the truth as they ought to have known it; and, therefore, the first effect of its bright beams now falling on their minds stripped of those denominational coverings amid which they had hitherto lived and moved, would be to drive them off in crowds, and throw very many of them into the ranks of a false christianity.

Some, indeed, may suppose that this would be a desirable result, that it would be better thus to get rid of the influence of all such persons, who never really were the friends of the gospel and of the church of Christ. And there is, we grant, some truth in this view of the subject; but a more extended and deep

observation, we are persuaded, will lead to an opposite conclusion.

So far, indeed, as the influence of this class of persons operates to the hindrance of the truth, either in the church or in the world, it would undoubtedly be better were the church without it, and every pious man will prudently endeavor to counteract it. But, is it not a fact, that the operation of much the larger portion of their influence, without, it may be, any such wish or intention on their part, is really in favor of the truth ?

Suppose, for example, an individual of this class,—a man of substance and a man of family,—the first he gives more or less liberally to the cause of Christ, the second he places under faithful ministrations of the gospel; he himself, indeed, remains all his days a stranger to the truth and grace of the Lord Jesus; but his position necessarily leads him to sustain the gospel, and member after member of his family,—a son, a daughter,

the wife of his bosom,—is brought to feel its transforming power, and, in the meanwhile, his general influence also in society, is, upon the whole, in favor of true religion. Every attentive observer of the visible church will discern that we have described a very common case.

Now, we ask, is it desirable to introduce such a state of things as would cause this individual to break away from all his ecclesiastical connections, and renounce for himself, and those dependant upon him the influence of the church; or, what is still worse, to throw his family, his property, his influence, all into the scale of error? But these results would inevitably have followed hitherto in multitudes of cases had denominational divisions been done away. Neither the church nor the world, if we have not altogether misunderstood the signs of the times, was prepared for such a change; and the former must, we are persuaded, be much more enlightened and holy before she can well

dispense with those many advantages which denominational divisions, notwithstanding all their evils, have, in this point of view, actually conferred upon her.

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## CHAPTER XII.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION TENDED TO  
PREVENT ECCLESIASTICAL OPPRESSION ?

Each denomination compelled to maintain liberty of conscience ; this has kept alive the odium against oppression, and obliged each sect to avoid even the appearance of this evil.

**LIBERTY** of conscience and of individual judgment in matters of religion, (that most precious and sacred right of human nature) lies at the very foundation of denominational distinctions. Each denomination, therefore, in order to maintain its own position, is compelled to be a witness and defender of this great principle, and thus

to oppose the worst form of ecclesiastical oppression.

Again, the existence of different denominations has served to keep alive a general odium against oppressors, and in this way prevented each other, as they valued their character, and dreaded reproach and disgrace, to avoid all measures and acts of an oppressive character.

And, to name no more, — the sympathy and protection which the oppressed of one denomination will be sure to meet with in others, cannot but operate to hinder oppression. Where many denominations exist in a country, the one who oppresses its members, cannot fail to drive them off, and thus weaken itself, and strengthen the hands of its rivals.

Till, then, the church becomes much more holy, the best preventive and remedy for oppression, will continue to be diversity of denominations. It is quite easy to see that she cannot, as yet, do without this species of disciplinary influence.



## CHAPTER XIII.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION GREATLY  
COUNTERACTED THE EVILS OF CHURCH ESTAB-  
LISHMENTS ?

The tendency of an established church to oppression, — to corruption, — to inefficiency, — to deadness : — reformers, but especially denominational divisions, counteract this.

THE tendency of an established church to oppression is notorious. Look to whatever age, or to whatever quarter of the world we may, this fact stares us in the face. The extent or worldly grandeur of the favored denomination is by no means the sole cause of its despotic tendencies. — The petty church of Geneva has grievously oppressed, as well as the large and wealthy establishment of England. But, upon the operation of denominational divisions to restrain such oppression, we need here say no more, having already

sufficiently dwelt upon it under our last head.

There are, however, many other evils besides oppression which are sure to accompany an ecclesiastical establishment. Pride, arrogance, worldliness, spiritual ignorance, and a general deadness to spiritual things,—are a few of these evils. Their name is *Legion*. Hence, the constant tendency of such a church is to run down; and instead of being “the light of the world, and the salt of the earth,” to rest as a thick cloud upon the people, and become the source of the greatest corruptions. He must have read ecclesiastical history to little purpose, who has not learned this.

A reformer, now and then, raised up—a Wickliff, a Wesley, or a Whitefield,—may in some measure check these evils; but the most effectual, and only permanent remedy, in the present imperfect state of the church, is the operation of denominational divisions upon the establishment.

The zeal, activity, and spirit of liberty among dissenters cannot but exercise a continual revival and reforming influence upon the establishment. And if, notwithstanding this salutary influence, there is so much of evil in the latter, what would it become were this influence altogether to cease ?

The existence of different denominations has, also, in some measure made up for the insufficiency of church establishments to supply the spiritual wants of the people. No church establishment has ever yet completely met the religious exigencies of a nation, and the continual tendency of such an ecclesiastical body, is to become less and less efficient. The state of every country, in which there is an established church, furnishes sad evidence of this. Even in England, and in the city of London, there are parish churches which cannot hold the tenth part of the parishioners. What would become of such a population without the zeal and

activity of other denominations ? As the national church became more and more effete, they would sink lower and lower in heathenish ignorance and depravity, till the nation perished in its own corruption.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION KEPT IN VIEW MANY IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES WHICH, OTHERWISE, MIGHT HAVE BEEN LOST SIGHT OF, OR TRODDEN UNDER FOOT ?

A constant tendency in the church to lose sight of important truths;—the world opposed to them. Quakers,—their good influence, &c. Instances of denied, or neglected truths,—influence of denominational division here. Note. Litigation between church members, debt, etc. Discipline of Quakers.

A PERFECTLY holy church would have a pure zeal for all truth. Hence, according to the importance of a truth—its bear-

ings upon the best interests of men, or their disposition to lose sight of it, or reject it on account of its crossing some of their cherished corruptions,—would such a church hold up that truth, and meekly but earnestly contend for it.

But, the whole history of the church has shewn a disposition to compromise important truths, and, in very many cases, give them up entirely. The world, also, and the great Adversary of the gospel are, of course, in open opposition to divine truth; and these have been so powerful that an imperfect church has not always had strength enough to make effectual resistance. Thus, truth after truth has been wrested, as it were, from the church, and its light put out, and the world enabled to walk on, unrebuked, in the darkness it so much desired. There have been times, for example, when scarcely a voice was heard in the church for peace, temperance, liberty of conscience, and other rights of man. Wars, violence, oppres-

sion—corruption, in ten thousand forms, threatened to cover the earth.

In these exigencies faithful witnesses arose in behalf of the abjured or neglected truths. For their testimony they were often thrust out by an unfaithful church, or they separated themselves from it ;—in either case, they held fast to these truths as the bond of their union, and continued to bear a suffering testimony for them, till, at last, their voice was heard even by their very oppressors. Who can tell, for example, how much christendom of this day is indebted to the Quakers for their meek, persevering maintenance of peace and temperance principles, and their opposition to oppression in all its forms? Their averseness to litigation also, and their rigid discipline against all dishonesty in business transactions have, undoubtedly, not been without their effect upon other denominations.\* We have often thought that God,

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\* The points above alluded to, viz., litigation between church members, and unfairness in business transactions, are worthy of much more thought than they have generally

peradventure has kept them alive, as a denomination, for their faithful testimony to these important principles.

There are other great truths which are exceedingly apt to be overlooked or denied. For example, the comparative unimportance of mere forms. Have not some spoken as if they verily believed that no prayer could possibly be heard unless it was extempore?—and others as strenuously contended for the use of a prayer-

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received. We would, therefore, ask the reader's serious attention to a few passages of God's word in which the duty of professors of religion and the church, with reference to this whole subject, is most plainly set forth.

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and, not before the saints?—Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And, if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If, then, ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?—But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because, ye go to law one with another;

book on all occasions? Nay, some have been found to maintain that every pin, and cord, and stake in their tabernacle was of divine appointment; and therefore that the least departure from their mode of church government and form of worship was schism. "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are THESE."

Now, suppose that the church had continued one, and been no holier than

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why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." (1 Cor. vi: 1—8).

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another."—(Rom. xiii: 8).

"Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you: that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."—(1 Thess. iv: 11—12).

"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail, night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we



it has ever yet been, would not some one of these forms have been the *idolatry* of christendom, admitting no rival, and pressing like an incubus upon the heart of true piety?

But the existence of different denominations has demonstrated the comparative worthlessness of mere forms, by shewing that essential christianity—enlightened, practical godliness—can live and flourish

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commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."—(2 Thess. III: 7—10).

Here, then, we are taught that a strict integrity in all our dealings, as well as industry in some lawful pursuit, are scriptural duties. He, who neglects them, can have no well founded claim to the christian character. We learn, also, that the church ought to provide by arbitration for preventing, as far as possible, her members from prosecuting each other, in the civil courts; and, that, she ought carefully to see to it, that no dishonest member disgraces her communion.

But, how sadly have most denominations, in their discipline, overlooked these plain directions of God's word!—How few sermons are ever heard on the subjects of diligence in business, and punctuality in paying debts! It is to be feared that such admonitions would be sorely felt in many congregations, and the preacher be thought very *old fashioned* in his notions.

Christians of other names would here do well to take a

under almost every ecclesiastical constitution and mode of worship. Good men in different ranks, begin to see these things; hence, it is becoming more and more difficult to get them enlisted in controversy about mere forms; and they are more heartily disposed to make common cause with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, in the great work of extending the blessings of his truth and kingdom.

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lesson from the Quakers. In "The Discipline of the Society of Friends," the principles of the gospel upon these subjects, are faithfully adhered to. It directs, first, private remonstrance; and, then, if not successful, arbitration; and, in the last resort, the action of the Meeting: and all this in so judicious and, manifestly equitable a manner as rarely fails of securing justice, and preventing litigation.

In the case of a member's refusing, or neglecting to pay his debts, he is at once kindly, but firmly dealt with. He must "*without too long delay*" do his duty in the matter, or be disowned.

Let it be noted, also, that their discipline, in the true spirit of scriptural integrity, will not allow that any bankrupt law can free a man from the moral obligation of debt. Hence, as soon as any one of their members, who has taken the benefit of such a law, becomes able to discharge the claims upon him, he is required so to do.—What is this more than simple honesty? and, surely, a church member ought to be, at least, an honest man.

## CHAPTER XV.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION OPENED A NEW AND VERY IMPORTANT FIELD OF USEFULNESS?

A prophet not accepted in his own country;—and why? The operation of this principle in different denominations in securing peculiar courtesy to the stranger;—Dr. Milnor's testimony;—Also, its influence in spreading opportunities of usefulness before those whose fidelity to the gospel has limited or destroyed their power to do good in their own denomination.

THERE is in the heart of man, and especially of civilized man, a disposition to look kindly upon the stranger, and to receive his communications with a marked interest and respect. The same things will not command half the attention to one with whom we have been habitually conversant.

It is in accordance with this principle of human nature our Lord tells us—“No

prophet is accepted in his own country." It is, also, we have often thought, an exemplification, and a most convincing proof of the same truth, that the Great Head of the church has, in his wise and holy providence, so ordered it, that very few ministers ever preach the gospel to those among whom they have been brought up. Their lot, without any particular effort on their part, and, indeed, not unfrequently contrary to their inclinations, is commonly cast in some far distant community.

But, has not the principle here brought to view been made especially strong and operative by denominational division? — Not only as christians are the people of any particular communion disposed to exercise a charitable spirit towards the professedly pious stranger who may appear among them, but as members of the denomination, each one seems to feel that its honor requires of him, in such cases, a peculiar manifestation of courtesy, and confiding kindness. Who that has at all

mingled in christian intercourse, with other denominations, has not experienced this? We have often heard that noble-hearted man of God, the lamented Milnor, speak in terms of warmest gratitude of the affectionate treatment he received from evangelical christians of different names, and of the broad and delightful field of usefulness thus opened to him. It was doubtless such intercourse and such labors that greatly contributed to that rare elevation and refinement of character which clustered about him the reverence and affection of all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and made even men of the world feel the vast superiority of the christian gentleman.

But, there is another view of this subject, which ought not, in these days to be overlooked.

We have seen how denominational division ordinarily operates to extend, in many cases, the sphere of christian usefulness. But, besides this, are there not circum-

stances, now and then, occurring in different denominations, which render to some good men the field thus opened almost their only sphere of influence? Unless we greatly mistake, such has too often been the case. To particularize these circumstances, and dwell upon their ever varying and pernicious influences, would not be possible in the few pages to which our undertaking limits us. A volume would be necessary to do justice to this part of our subject. And, such a volume, if faithfully written, though it would, doubtless, give much pain to every pious heart, could not but be full of profit. It would bring to view, in their most hateful aspects, many of those evils which now divide the visible church, and throw much light upon the means of bringing about a true christian union. We can now, however, only state a case for the sake of illustrating our position. The student of ecclesiastical history, or the careful observer of the present state of the church will readily

perceive that our sketch is not, alas! a mere picture of the fancy.

Suppose, then, a denomination thoroughly protestant in its doctrinal standards should really become so far corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, that Socinianism, or Popery, or some other anti-evangelical system of views, feelings, and modes of action were decidedly in the ascendant throughout its borders.— Who does not see that in such a state of things, they who remained faithful, would have their influence and usefulness in the denomination much restricted, if not almost destroyed? Why, their former brethren, those who in their own denomination once professed a peculiar fellowship for them in the bonds of a common evangelical faith, and with whom they once “took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company,” would now prove their most determined enemies, just because apostacy ever feels the fidelity of former associates

the most painful reproach to itself, a reproach that must, if possible, be kept out of view.

Suppose, further, the pastoral office in some congregation, or a professorship in a Theological Seminary, or some other position of influence in the denomination to be vacant, who would be most likely to be chosen to it? The man who had remained faithful? Certainly not. However exemplary his character as a christian and a minister, and, however high his other qualifications, he would assuredly be excluded. Any one, however dubious his pretensions, the merest novice in the church, who had bowed the knee to Baal, or was willing so to do, would be preferred to him. Indeed, such a man would find himself hedged in on every side. Nothing that power, and cunning, and malignity could do to excite prejudice against him and destroy his influence, would be spared. He must either yield to the current of corruption that is sweep-



ing over his church, or remain a proscribed man.

Here, also, has denominational division been often overruled for good. It has supplied a field of usefulness to many whose fidelity to Christ had very much limited their power to do good in their own ecclesiastical bounds. He who has thus shewn himself "faithful among the false" will not only be cheerfully met and greeted by christians of other names in the bible, the tract, and other great enterprises of their common christianity; but they will be sure, also, to receive, with a peculiarly cordial credence and kindness, any manifestations, either public or private, which he may make, of a disposition to do them good. They, who in the providence of God have been led farthest into this field, have found it continually enlarging before them, and presenting, on all sides, most favorable opportunities for wise and holy efforts. Hence, at every step, the humbling conviction has been forced upon them,

that their own deficiency in the graces of the christian character, was the only limit to their usefulness ; and they have often wondered and grieved that any in the different evangelical denominations could be found to “bite and devour one another” in bitter controversy, while such inviting occasions for the blessed work of doing each other good, were mutually and abundantly spread before them.



## CHAPTER XVI.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION MADE THE  
CORRUPTION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IMPOSSIBLE?

Tradition a very imperfect medium of information;—writing much better. Difficulty of settling the text of the ancient classics. The religious reverence of christians has always led them to watch the sacred writings with great care,—still, some variations have crept into them: Controversies and divisions in the Primitive church have effectually prevented any essential corruption of the Holy Scriptures. But our modern divisions furnish a perfect safeguard.

THOUGH writing is infinitely preferable to tradition as a medium of conveying important truths to distant ages; still, even manuscripts required to be guarded with great care, lest inadvertantly, or through design, they should become corrupt.

The slow and expensive process of copying necessarily made books rare, and in this way, also, increased their liability to corruption. Hence, the difficulty of

settling the text of the Greek and Roman classics, and the voluminous criticisms that their emendation has called forth. The art of printing has, indeed, rendered it much more difficult to corrupt an author, still, every critical student knows that even now it is not impossible ; and, that works which have been repeatedly published in the course of a century or two, are very apt to vary ; and that to secure correctness in such a republication, it is best to recur to a copy of an early edition.

These remarks must, however, be greatly modified, when applied to the Holy Scriptures. The religious veneration with which these were regarded from the beginning, would produce a continual watchfulness to preserve their integrity. And, yet, had there been no controversies among the early christians, it may be doubted whether we could have had as strong evidence as we now possess of the purity of the sacred text. The different divisions of

the orthodox, as well as the heretical sects, all acted as so many sentinels over God's word. It thus became well nigh impossible, and, indeed, in any important matter, altogether impossible to effect a corruption, without calling forth such a note of alarm as would ensure detection and defeat.

But, must it not be seen and acknowledged, that in denominational divisions, as now existing, we have a still better, or rather a perfect safeguard at all points for our common standard of faith and practice, the inspired writings?—so perfect, that even an attempt to corrupt the sacred text in one jot or tittle has never, in a single instance, escaped “unwhipped of justice.”



## CHAPTER XVII.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION INCREASED  
THE NUMBER OF CONVERTED SOULS ?

The church united, if perfectly holy, the most efficient instrument for the world's conversion. But a vast, united, unholy church is powerful chiefly for evil. Division increases efficiency in the work of Christ, by rendering each sect more wise to discern occasions and means of doing good, and active and enterprising in improving them.

A UNITED and perfectly holy church would be the most efficient instrument for the world's conversion. No organization could be so wise, none so strong to war against the kingdom of darkness, and extend the peaceful triumphs of the Redeemer. No christian doubts this; and every enlightened christian prays for the church's growth in grace, not merely for her own sake, but to fit her for those glorious victories over the world, which only an eminently pure church can achieve.

But the question with which we are now concerned is not,—whether the church, one and perfectly holy, or the church as now divided, would do most for the salvation of men?—but it is, whether the church in the latter state has not really been more instrumental in converting souls, than she would have been, if united, and with all her unholy hindrances clinging to her? We must answer this question in the affirmative. We cannot shut out this conviction, when we consider what denominational division has done to promote the more wide diffusion of the preaching of the gospel, to raise up faithful ministers, to advance christian education, and, in general, to accomplish so much positive good, as well as to prevent so much of that evil which could not but have resulted from one undivided, powerful, corrupt body. And, especially must we believe this when we consider that the general tendency of denominational action is, as we think we have shewn,

towards increasing light and purity; while, on the other hand, the whole testimony of history proves that the course of a great, united, all-powerful church, uninfluenced by denominational divisions, has, with rare intervals, been downward, downward, and that with increasing strides, into depths of thicker gloom and corruption.

There is another view of this subject which, we think, must commend itself to every reflecting, candid mind. It has been occasionally hinted at, under former heads of our discussion, but deserves, we think, a more distinct notice. There are certain ways and means of most successfully winning the attention, and influencing the conduct of others, which common sense, interest, and experience all teach men to employ in secular affairs. These ways and means must of course vary, just because times and circumstances vary. What may be wise and useful now, may be very unwise and worse than useless



on some other occasions. He who despises or neglects this adaptation of means to the end, can scarcely fail to draw down defeat upon even his best meant endeavors. So it is ever in the concerns of this life.

But, do not these remarks hold true also of Christ's cause? Let us see what light they throw upon it. Open the pages of history;—there is a vast ecclesiastical body, wealthy, powerful,—extending its arms over the whole length and breadth of the land. It has become too wise to learn, though far behind the age; and too unwieldy to accommodate itself to the changes which have passed over every thing else about it. In the pride of its strength, it would, indeed, rather break men to its sway, than condescend to win them to its bosom. It has, therefore, crowds of selfish, servile adherents; but it provokes many into honest, determined resistance. As a church, its influence has long been on the wane; it serves for little

else than a ladder to ambition, and a retreat for the superstitious. It has abundance of "the form," but scarcely any of "the power of godliness." No wonder that ignorance and depravity increase among the people at home, and that no messenger of salvation is sent abroad.— Let such a body alone, and it becomes not merely useless, but a mountain obstacle in the way of Christ's cause.

But Providence does not let it alone.— He comes down, as of old, and confounds the language of babel builders, and thus scatters them abroad. In his wisdom and goodness he raises up and combines, in various forms, the elements of a corrective influence. Different denominations start into being, suited to the condition and wants of the people, full of enterprise and activity, quick to discern advantages, and ready to improve them. The progress of decline is thus arrested. New life is infused into the whole mass. And thus, multitudes of precious immortal souls

are converted to Christ, who, without this merciful dispensation of Providence towards the church, would have perished in their sins.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION PROMOTED  
THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BENEFITS OF  
CHRISTIANITY?

Where the gospel does not convert the soul, it yet makes better husbands, wives, parents, children, and members of society. These moral effects good in themselves, and subsidiary, also, to spiritual blessings. The externals of different denominations attractive to different classes of worldly persons. Their support thus engaged for christianity,—its moral influence, in this way, more widely diffused.

THE grand object of the gospel is to save men's souls. But it confers many other, though inferior blessings, upon individuals and society. The moral power

of the gospel is always far more widely felt than its spiritual influences. For one soul sanctified and saved by it, scores are made better fathers and mothers, better members of the family, better citizens.

These lower blessings are in themselves precious, and they are worthy of cultivation, especially under such a government as ours, where free institutions must ever mainly rest upon the moral effects of the gospel. We acknowledge, indeed, that they are to be valued also, and chiefly, as subsidiary to those higher and everlasting mercies which christianity brings to men. The moral influences of the gospel prepare the way for its spiritual influences upon the individual and the community generally. We cannot but cherish a better hope for those who under the ministrations of christianity have begun to "break off their sins by righteousness," —to cultivate a higher tone of moral character. The promises of God and all the experience of the christian encourage to such a hope.

But is it not the fact, that, when it is proposed to get up a church in a neighborhood, or among any portion of the community, the social and political influences of the gospel are the benefits which are, usually, first thought of by the multitude, and most incline their hearts to favor the scheme? Hence, they do not inquire so much into the doctrines about to be brought among them by the proposed church, as into its government and mode of worship — the aspect it presents, its external appearance; and, if these please, they will give it their support.

Hence, as a church is more or less aristocratic, or democratic in its organization, or plain, or stately in its ceremonial, will it take with different individuals and different communities. What may find no acceptance with one class of mind, or in one neighborhood, will be received with high favor by others, or in other places. Here, for example, a Methodist church may be got up; there nothing but a Presbyterian church will do; in a third

the ecclesiastical government of the Baptists will find favor; and the fourth must have an Episcopal church. One or another has in this way been permitted to enter with its moral power, to enlighten, purify, and elevate, where all others would be excluded. It is thus denominational division has tended to diffuse more widely the social and political benefits of the gospel. And let it be added, that only a christianity so varied in its aspects and applications, so free, active—enterprising, could meet the exigencies of our condition as a people, grow with our growth, spread with our extension, and throw its salutary and saving influences about us at every step. An established church would have ruined us, or rather left us to ruin ourselves. In its stiff, unbending uniformity it could have touched us at but few points; and it would have been impossible for its unwieldiness to keep pace with our national career, and prove a match for the rapidly developing and ever varying powers of corruption.

## CHAPTER XIX.

HAS NOT DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION PRODUCED AMONG CHRISTIANS MORE DISCRIMINATING VIEWS OF RELIGION, A FIRMER GRASP OF ITS TRUTHS, A HIGHER DEGREE OF PERSONAL HOLINESS, AND A LARGER MEASURE OF CHARITY TOWARDS EACH OTHER ?

Why truth is chiefly to be valued. The best men have been in some respects ignorant, and in others mistaken,—hence, some truths are essential and others of inferior importance:—to deny this is to lay the foundation for bigotry, exclusiveness, etc. Denominational division has shewn that real piety may exist and flourish under many different modes of ecclesiastical government, worship, etc., and thus led to deeper and clearer views of truth, wiser and holier efforts, and a broader charity.

DIVINE truth is precious principally because it is the means of sanctifying and saving the soul. “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” Hence, all the truths of revelation should be highly prized, and earnestly contended for.—

Still, as "there is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," so none can claim exemption from error. There are truths of God in respect to which some of the best men have been mistaken; and, certainly there are others of which such men have been ignorant.

It follows, therefore, that there must be in religion a difference between truths, as essential and non-essential. And yet some have denied this. The tendency of such a view in him who entertains it, towards impairing his personal holiness by fixing his mind as much, to say the least, upon "the mint, the anise, and the cummin," as upon "judgment, mercy, and faith," is too obvious to need argument. And equally obvious is its tendency to render him uncharitable, exclusive, and intolerant towards all who differ from him, however slightly.

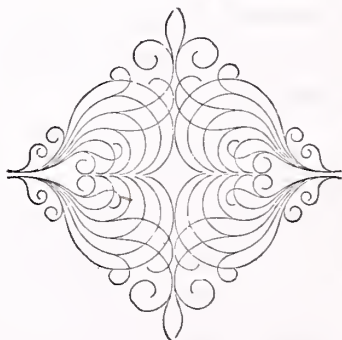
Here, we believe, that denominational division has been overruled and sanctified under the good providence and Spirit of



God to the production of the happiest results. It has demonstrated by plain and palpable facts, meeting us every day in the most impressive forms, the truth and importance of the teaching of the apostle, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The christian sees multitudes all around him widely differing from him in their modes of church government and worship, and in many speculative opinions, who yet give scriptural evidence of having "received Christ Jesus, the Lord, and of walking in him." He can neither shut his eyes, nor close his heart against these delightful facts. He does not wish so to do. He rejoices in them. For while they exceedingly strengthen his attachment to all truth, they lead him to see more clearly, and to prize more highly those great truths which constitute "THE COMMON SALVATION." The influence of such views upon his personal holiness, and upon the charitable

feelings of his heart towards others, cannot but be great. They give a wise direction and a more intense fervency to all his desires and efforts. He thus becomes a holier man, and better prepared to unite in every good word and work with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and the souls of their fellow men.

From the views advanced in this and the previous chapters we may deduce the following inferences :—



## CHAPTER XX.

THE SUDDEN AMALGAMATION OF ALL DENOMINATIONS WOULD BE PRODUCTIVE OF GREAT EVILS.

Much of the good of separate action would be lost—many and sad evils would arise—ignorance, error, pride, deadness to spiritual things, the love of domination, worldly ascendancy, etc.

THAT zeal for denominational purity, prosperity, and extension, which now is so full of blessing to the body itself, and diffuses so many blessings over other denominations and the world generally, would at once be extinguished. And thus we should be deprived of all those rich and varied benefits that now grow out of separate action.

But this is not all; the ill consequences of such amalgamation would not be merely negative. A frightful catalogue of positive evils, we have every reason to fear, would come in like a flood upon us. To

say nothing of those discontents and heart-burnings which such a vast, unholy union would contain within itself,—(for multitudes could not be reconciled to the loss of those denominational peculiarities and advantages which they once possessed,)—it would quickly, in view of its own magnitude and strength, be puffed up with pride, and arrogance, and the love of domination. Soon would such a church have its foot upon the neck of all other powers. A Gregory and a Henry, an Innocent and a John, would be speedily re-enacted. Bad men would be universally in the ascendant, piety decline, and the light of truth fade away; till all the corruption that is in the world, through lust, would enter in; and, thus, the world instead of being subdued to Christ, would swallow up his Church.



## CHAPTER XXI.

A WISE AND SAFE WAY OF PROMOTING A RE-  
UNION OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH IS—TO LABOR,  
ABOVE ALL THINGS, FOR THE ADVANCEMENT  
OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH, SPIRITUAL RELIGION,  
AND PRACTICAL PIETY.

It requires great holiness, wisely and beneficially to wield great power. He is the best friend of union, who does most for the growth of holiness.

HE must, we think, have studied ecclesiastical history to little purpose, and observed still less of the actual state of the various denominations, who can close his eyes to the fact that, the christian body is not yet holy enough to be trusted with the vast powers of a united church. It has neither wisdom nor benevolence sufficient to wield such an influence for its own good, or that of the world. And a very great revival of pure religion must take place among all denominations before they are

prepared unitedly to bring "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" He, therefore, who does most by his prayers, his liberality, his energetic action, and above all, by an exemplary, christian walk to advance such a revival, is laboring most safely, and efficiently for a blessed re-union of the church.



## CHAPTER XXII.

DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION AFFORDS A PECULIAR AND VERY STRONG EVIDENCE FOR CHRISTIANITY.

Careless and bad men make the division of christians a pretext for rejecting, or at least neglecting religion;—the serious inquirer never. But, had not christianity been true the division of its friends would have, long since, exposed and ruined it. A false religion could not have stood such a trial.

NOTHING is more common than to hear some men excuse themselves for neglecting christianity, and others for rejecting it altogether, on the ground that there are so many denominations all differing from each other. From this the one infers that there is no truth in any of them, and the other that if there is truth it is impossible to find it, and, therefore, it is useless to trouble themselves about it.

But such objections cannot stand a

moment's honest examination. It is quite easy to discern that they have no force in themselves, but derive their whole strength from the wilful perverseness of the heart that cherishes them, and its real indifference to the truth. Hence, they seldom do much injury to the really serious inquirer. By such a man, religion will always be felt to be so much a matter of *personal* concern, that every other question will be seen by him to be a grand impertinence. His first and all absorbing inquiry will be "what must I do to be saved?" Till he find satisfaction here, he will have neither mind nor heart to busy himself about any other matter.

But, do not denominational divisions, so far from being a valid argument against christianity, afford one of the strongest evidences in its favor? It is a homely proverb, but full of truth—"when rogues fall out, honest men are likely to get their dues." Good men can afford to



differ ; bad men never: the first have nothing to fear, either from the mistakes of friends, or from open enemies ; the last know too much of each other not to dread mutual exposure. Hence, it has been well argued that the treachery of Judas must have been fatal to Christ's cause had he not been what he professed to be. But neither the infirmities of honest disciples, nor the wickedness of the traitor could really injure christianity, just because it is true.

So, also, we argue from denominational divisions. What a proof of the divine origin of christianity that the very divisions of its friends, instead of injuring it, should have been so wonderfully overruled for its advancement! A false religion would long since, under ~~any~~ circumstances, have been exposed and destroyed.—*Sluck*  
Nothing but the truth could have passed through so fiery an ordeal.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

DENOMINATIONAL DIVISIONS FURNISH MANY REASONS FOR PATIENCE, CONTENTMENT, AND THANKFULNESS.

Complaints of worldly men about sectarianism, — christians too much led away by them. The divisions of the visible church a part of God's providential dispensations towards it, — and, therefore, worthy to be studied, and full of improvement.

THE world is full of complaints about the evils of divisions among christians. — It has no expression of contempt and bitterness which it considers too strong to apply to sectarianism. Even christians themselves have been too much led away by this popular outcry; they have seen little else but causes of trouble and vexation in their mutual differences. But, is this wise? We do not mean, indeed, to be the apologist of division. But, is it wise to take so limited a view of so

extensive a subject? By looking only at its evils do not christians weaken their own hands, and encourage the wicked?

There is a bright side, also, to this cloud on which we do well to look. Is not the permission of these divisions a part of God's providential dealings with his church? No christian will deny this. It is, then, worthy of our study. And, if candidly and devoutly contemplated, while we shall doubtless find much in it to cause us to take shame and confusion of face to ourselves, we shall see, also, in addition to those reasons which we have in the foregoing essay so imperfectly exhibited, many other grounds of patience, contentment, and thankfulness before Him who often extracts the most shining benefits from his darkest dispensations.

The enlightened christian can scarcely fail to discern, in view of this whole subject, that of all those sects which retain the great truths of the gospel, each has under providence, its special mission, and

fills a place of usefulness that none other is so well fitted to occupy. And, after all have done their uttermost in the great work of evangelizing the world, there will still be—alas, how much!—room unoccupied and a vast labor to be performed.—Instead, therefore, of wishing to blot out any one of these denominations, he rejoices in its prosperity, and his heart's desire and prayer to God is, that it may be yet more abundantly blessed to the conversion and salvation of men.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

DENOMINATIONAL DIVISIONS FURNISH MUCH WHICH OUGHT TO FILL THE HEARTS OF CHRISTIANS WITH MUTUAL CHARITY.

The christian's reflections upon his denominational position. The results of his thoughts upon his own heart, and in respect to others.

WE suppose that many a pious Episcopalian has reasoned thus within himself, "I find myself, under Providence, in the Episcopal church. I am satisfied, after careful examination of her doctrinal standards, in the light of God's word, that she is sound in the faith. I see, also, many other religious denominations around me, who hold fast to the same great essential truths. Here, then, is a broad ground for the exercise of charity towards each other, and for united action, so far as is consistent with our several positions, to advance, more efficiently, the cause of

our common Lord and the salvation of our fellow men.

There are, indeed, certain peculiarities in my church, by which we are kept, as a denomination, distinct from other ecclesiastical bodies. But my edification and usefulness are probably as great where I am as they would be, in the present imperfect state of things, any where else, and perhaps greater. I can see no reason, then, why I should quit the post in which Providence has been pleased to place me. And thus, also, I doubt not, but that others of other names are equally persuaded in their own minds. It would be uncharitable in me to think otherwise of them."

Now, what is to hinder the pious Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist from reasoning in the same way? And, in fact, do not christians, in general, take just this view of their position?—and discover, too, in their denominational differences, as well as in their denominational

agreements much room for the exercise of a genuine scriptural charity.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

THE PRESENT DENOMINATIONAL STATE OF THE CHURCH SUGGESTS MUCH TO ENCOURAGE US FOR CHRIST'S CAUSE.

The Millennium,—various opinions upon it. The Bible clearly reveals a “latter-day glory;”—christians universally expect it;—the influence of this expectation to arouse to effort, etc. An erroneous view. Dark and corrupt state of the church before the Reformation. The Crusades. Results of denominational division, increase of light, piety, etc. Encouragement.

It is the general belief of christians that a day is coming when truth and righteousness will prevail on the earth. This “latter-day glory” of the church was designated, in very early times, the Millennium. With the great variety of opinions

advanced in former ages, or now entertained on the subject of this millennial period, we have nothing here to do; our concern is simply with the fact that such a happy day is generally and confidently looked forward to on the ground of many prophetic intimations conveyed in clear, and very glowing terms.

Whoever carefully examines the reports of the various societies for the spread of the gospel, the speeches delivered at their meetings, the sermons preached on their behalf, or the communications of their missionaries or other laborers, cannot fail to see that this general expectation of the final triumph of true religion exerts a powerful influence in stimulating the pious heart to action. Christians pray, and give, and exert themselves, and make sacrifices just because they confidently believe that success will crown their efforts, that the glorious day will come when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."



But, is it not a fact, also, that with this almost universal expectation of a Millennial period, there is connected a very wide spread impression that all denominational differences must first be done away, and that till this be brought about, very little, comparatively, can be accomplished towards the anticipated triumph?

Concerning the ways and means by which such an amalgamation is to be effected, there are very indefinite and discordant opinions. Each denomination, indeed, or rather many in each denomination are apt to suppose that all other denominations are, some how or other, finally to be brought into their church, and that their's will thus be the honored body that is to be mainly instrumental in bringing in "the latter-day glory;" and that during this holy, happy period, till the close of the gospel dispensation, and the coming of the Son of Man to judgment, they will be the sole church on earth. But however various the views of christians

in respect to the mode in which denominational differences are to be done away, very many expect that it will be brought to pass, and their hopes, of the approach of the Millennium rise or fall just in proportion as they think they see evidence of such a re-union.

And yet, if the views expressed in the foregoing inquiry, are generally true, so far from making the coming of the Millennium dependant upon the amalgamation of all the churches, and so far from being cast down in view of present denominational differences, may we not see in these very differences strong grounds of encouragement for Christ's cause ?

Look backward through the ages, from the time at which the Reformation commenced, over the state of European christendom, when denominational differences were scarcely known, and not at all tolerated ; when one vast ecclesiastical body possessed all power, what darkness, deadness, cruel despotism, and hideous corrup-

tion universally prevailed. Christianity, so far from extending its borders, was at times well nigh swallowed up. Mahomedanism established itself in Sicily, Spain, and the South of France, overran Western Asia, and burst in like a flood upon the Eastern parts of Europe. Men's hearts were every where failing them for fear. These apprehensions, in part, gave rise to the Crusades which, without the least thought or desire of such a result by their chief authors and promoters, contributed indirectly, but powerfully, to elevate the masses of the people, and enable them to break through those shackles of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny in which they had been so long held. A way was thus prepared for the Reformation.

Now look forward from this era over the three hundred years that have since elapsed, during which liberty of conscience has been widely enjoyed, and denominational differences have sprung up and covered a large part of christendom. What a con-

trast does this period afford with the centuries which went before! How widely has scriptural knowledge been spread.— And, in consequence of this, how different the state of the people generally—enlightened, elevated, free in comparison with what they once were. What means of diffusing the gospel, at home and abroad, have been devised and successfully put in operation. There is hardly a dark place, on the earth, to which the zeal of christians has not carried them. Almost everywhere has christian enterprise planted instrumentalities for the propagation of the gospel, which require only one wide effusion of the Holy Spirit to ensure the rapid approach of “the latter-day glory.”

Who, then, would throw back this great work, and place the church where she was before the **R**eformation, when the influence of denominational differences was scarcely felt, when gross darkness covered the people, and iniquity abounded,

and true religion seemed almost to have forsaken the earth? What denomination is now so enlightened, so holy, that it could safely receive into its bosom all other denominations, and employ the vast amount of power thus accumulated within it for its own highest good and the best interests of the world? But he who expects all other denominations to come into his, and on this union builds his hope of the millennium, can indulge such an expectation, and such hopes only on the ground that his is just that enlightened, holy denomination, for which we have inquired. Even if one whole denomination could flatter themselves into such an opinion of their superiority, how could they convince others in the face of such multiplied, palpable, and painful evidence to the contrary? We must close our eyes to present appearances and all history, if we could look for anything else than another Anti-Christ in such a union.

But if, with denominational differences as now existing, so much has been accomplished in so short a period, what bright hopes may we not cherish for the future! A great work has certainly been done; a still greater preparation is in progress, and almost every thing conspires to encourage our hearts for Christ's cause.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS  
OUGHT TO REJOICE IN EACH OTHER'S PROS-  
PERITY.

Proper measure of prosperity — divine favor, holiness, conversion of souls. Every true christian must rejoice in these things wherever he may see them. The prosperity of any one denomination will diffuse itself over all of like spirit.

THE true prosperity of each denomina-  
tion is—not worldly wealth, power, or  
numbers, but—that measure of divine bles-  
sing bestowed upon their labors for the  
conversion of sinners, and the building up  
of christians in their most holy faith. As  
without the former none can enter the  
kingdom of heaven ; so in proportion to  
the latter may we expect the work of  
the Lord to advance. A holy people, will  
ordinarily, be most blessed to the promotion  
of Christ's cause. Such He will ever de-

light to honor. Ought not, then, christians to rejoice in that upon which their common Lord and Savior looks with approbation? Just as we have "the spirit of Christ" will our hearts be glad to see the riches of his grace magnified in "souls renewed and sins forgiven," whatever the instrumentality he may condescend to employ.

But, further, it is impossible for any one denomination of God's faithful people to prosper without all others of the same spirit sharing in the blessing. Their true interests are all bound up together; so that "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." Let the reviving influences of God's spirit descend upon any one congregation, and, in consequence of this, its members become more engaged in "the work of the Lord," and those who have hitherto been thoughtless and unconcerned, begin to inquire—"what they shall do to be saved?" and all congregations about it, of what-



ever name, who regard the work of the Lord as they ought, and faithfully wait upon Him, cannot fail, in due season, to share in the blessing. So far as they do not, they may be assured that the fault is in themselves. Let not "Ephraim *envy* Judah, nor Judah *rex* Ephraim," and then all will rejoice in "the common salvation."

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES MAY BE MAINTAINED WITHOUT DIVISION.

Division always wrong. Differences may and probably ever will exist in the visible church;—hence, even where separation is expedient, division need not follow, and would not were christians as holy as they ought to be.

DIVISION never can be right. "Is Christ divided?" But the whole company of the faithful varying so much in attain-

ments, dispositions, and circumstances, never can be brought to an exact agreement in every minor matter. It is not desirable that they should. A sound christian discretion will ever call for more or less difference. But it is equally true that such differences do not necessarily imply division; and they never produce it.\*

He who cannot differ with his brother without being divided from him, may be a christian, but, certainly, he is not eminently such. The ability to differ, if not a necessary evidence of grace, is one of the best measures of our growth in grace. Just as the church advances toward Mil-

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\* Formalism, Rationalism, and Evangelism are the three great influences, which, under a countless variety of phases, have continually struggled for mastery in the christian church. The two former are divisive in their very nature, and the source of all the divisions in the church; the last is essentially uniting, and affords the only possible basis of a true union.

The correctness of these positions, we think, will abundantly appear to any one who attentively examines the pages of ecclesiastical history, and of christian dogmatics, and carefully observes the characters and movements, both of friends and opposers in the union enterprise.

lennial light and Millennial holiness, will christians find it an easy thing to differ without being divided.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO MAKE SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR THE PROMOTION OF CHRISTIAN UNION.

Special efforts to promote christian union productive of the happiest results on their authors, and so far as their influence extends,—increase knowledge, charity, efficiency, etc. Signs of the times:—a great struggle approaching; all parties fast uniting into two vast conflicting hosts;—necessity of christian union to meet the crisis,—this necessity more and more seen and felt, hence, the special movement towards union now in progress. Despondency of some,—Gausson,—the triumph of the gospel certain.

WE have said in a former chapter that he who labors for the advancement of scriptural truth, spiritual religion, and practical piety, employs one of the most

important means to promote christian union. But he who does this is not likely to leave anything else undone which tends to the same happy result. Hence, we may expect to find the most earnest friends of union among the most spiritually minded and active christians in the various evangelical ranks. They will most readily see and feel its duty and importance, and give to it their prayers and best energies

Direct efforts to promote union, whether by public meetings of christians of different sects, or by social conference, or the pulpit, or the press, will throw increasing light on the character, condition, and relative position of the various denominations, shew how very extensively they are agreed, and how little it is, after all, which separates them. Prejudices will thus be removed, the rough voice of controversy, where it cannot be entirely silenced, will be softened down into the kindly accents of charity pleading for the

truth, good men of every name will be brought more and more together, and see with increasing clearness how “good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” — good both for their own growth in grace and for the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom.

But there is another view of this subject that cannot fail, we think, in these days, to impress itself with increasing force on the minds of intelligent reflecting christians generally. Is there not very much in the signs of the times, all indicating the approach of such a struggle as the world has never yet witnessed? And would not the anticipations of God’s people be fearful indeed, were it not for the animating language of prophecy? — A great crisis is certainly drawing nigh. The enemies of the truth, however much they may differ among themselves, are yet becoming sensible that in their grand purpose — opposition to Christ — they are one. “We will not have this man to reign

over us" is the language of all their movements. Mutual sympathy is thus drawing them closer to each other, and fast combining them in one, vast array against the common object of their hostility.

Instead, therefore, of the scattered and desultory warfare generally witnessed heretofore, there will soon be but two great conflicting hosts "gathered to the battle of that great day." On the one hand will be mustered Infidelity under its various banners, Rationalism in all its grades, Popery from the full grown man of sin to his feeblest stripling relatives in the different ranks ~~in~~ Protestantism—in a word, every form of Anti-Evangelical error and influence; and, on the other all the friends of "the truth as it is in Jesus," "the sacramental host of God's elect."—Terrible as this contest will be, and doubtful as the result may appear for a time, yet "the triumphing of the wicked shall be short."

The hearts of some good men have,

indeed, almost failed them in view of this anticipated contest, and the present divided state of the church. "We conclude with certainty," says the pious, and very able Professor Gausson of Geneva, "that a great struggle approaches, in which the Roman army, emboldened by our divisions, will throw itself upon us. It's victory will be easy; it will enter into our camp as did Cæsar into that of Pompey, after the discomfiture of Pharsalia; it will find us all in disorder, and soon have trampled us under its feet." (58th Circular of the Societe Evangelique).— "Emboldened by our *divisions!*"—if, indeed, the Roman army and its infidel confederates did thus find us in the great onset, gloomy as these anticipations are, there is too much reason to fear that they would be fully realized. But are there not many cheering evidences that the very expectation of the contest will do more to bring the people of God together and thus prepare them for it, than all

their past trials and perils? True, if found divided they would fall an easy prey to their enemies;—but what mean those many movements towards union all over the christian world! Do they not indicate an awakened and thoughtful state, such a growing wisdom and charity as must ere long combine all the friends of truth, wherever found, in one solid phalanx, instinct with an energy irresistible, not only for defence, but to spread dismay and rout through the ranks of the enemy? Yes, it is by this union, under a favoring Providence, and by the power of the Spirit of God, that the peaceful triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom are to be secured.

Let then special efforts for Christian Union be multiplied and extended,—as they assuredly will,—and who cannot see in them the most efficient means, and the strongest guarantee of the final and divinely promised victory when there shall be heard “great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become



the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever”



THE END.





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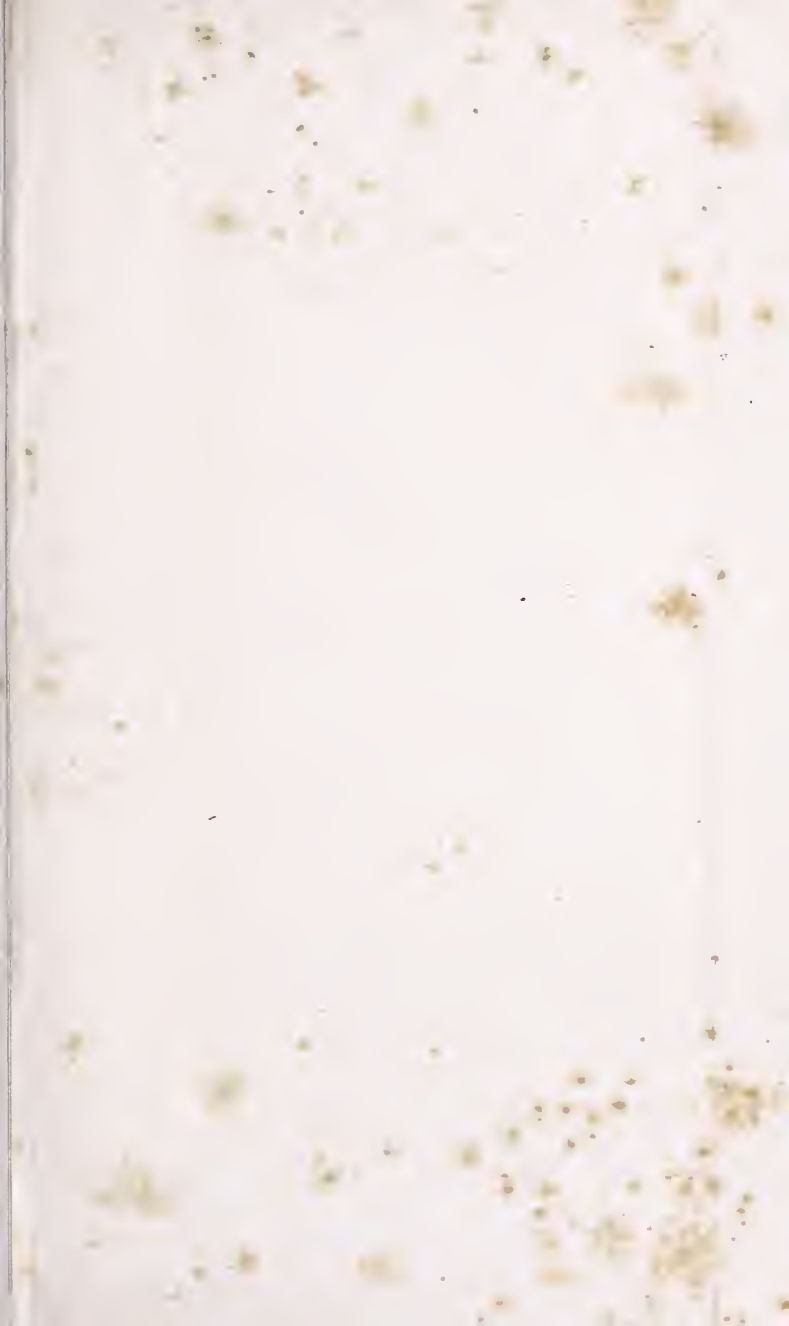
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